

The Way the Music Died

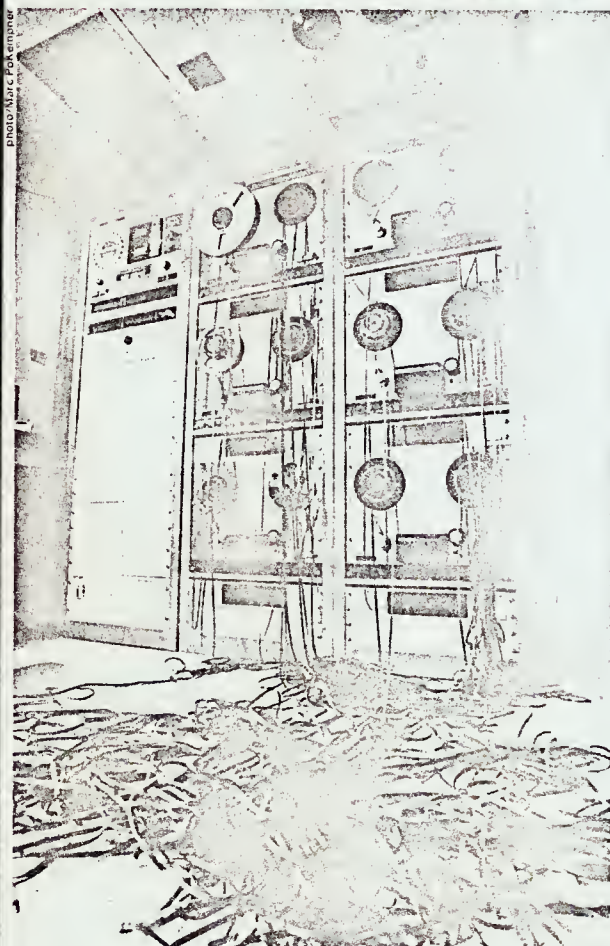


Photo: Marc Polakman

By Pat Colander

The true radio devotees, the ones who plug into the nearest outlet by day, fondle their transistors at night, and know the difference between the two only because a mellow-mouthed announcer occasionally interrupts the flow to tell them the time, they saw this comeback coming. Dedicated listeners know that you can't kill a 50,000 watt radio station by merely taking away the live orchestra, the girl soloist, and the tune-crooner master of ceremonies. The steady stream of disc jockeys fired at the drop of an Arbitron decimal point, the blare of the most obnoxious kind of hype, the scream of rock 'n' roll records sped up past the point of no return—these resulted in a kind of audio sickness, but not in death. Sure it was a mess when they tried taking the news out of the news shows, but, as it turned out, it wasn't a hopeless mess. And even as they rolled in the big, blue, electronic beautiful-music machines, the real radio people were confident that there would be no successful strangulation with computer tape. Anyone who believes in Marconi, remembers the Titanic, and has confidence in his antenna knows that radio

is forever and the life of any given format is but a one-night stand.

It's not easy to off a major market musickmaker, no matter what your game is. Ask anybody. Ask the handful of former WCFL station managers, the dozens of ex-program directors, or the hundreds of departed deejays. At 52, the "Voice of Labor" is not what you would call a spring chicken in the Chicago radio marketplace, and she's been ailing for sure, but this isn't the first time and it probably won't be the last. When times get tough, as they have been lately, the old doll has her memories to fall back on and the fickleness of public sentiment to look forward to.

Once a grande dame in Chicago radio, WCFL flaunted her ear-appeal over high places and at times gave her brethren pause (even though they were often backed up by big networks) at the numbers she was able to rack up. A survivor, she's had more than a hundred disc jockeys, announcers, or MCs (depending on the current lingo), and she took on nearly 60 of those during her halcyon days as a rocker. Her prize closet has runneth over at times and at times it has gone unattended. There were lean periods when

nothing seemed to work quite right and salad days when expensive machinery was lavished on her. Her staff has been purged out from under her, she's suffered desertion graciously, she's reappeared with Chickennan, Larry Lujack, and the Last Contest, and she's suffered some more. No doubt about it, WCFL's been passed around, but she hasn't passed out.

So-called "beautiful music," tested and true in medium-size radio markets, was the cause of WCFL's latest trip to the edge of night. Grocery-store, elevator muzak, a thorn in the sides of critics, announcers, and pop aficionados, had done well on the FM circuits in Chicago, but apparently it was not ready for the big time. On March 15, 1976, a heavily-promoted bland diet of Henry Mancini and the Baja Marimba band was served up to the Chicagoland audience, and it did not go down. Two thousand tunes per tape deck, punctuated by an occasional reassuring human voice, was not enough to make it. After a while, advertising could barely be given away. The few human beings charged with seeing to it that the tapes spun properly on their spindles panicked. A year and a half went by and the station manager who made the change was fired.

That was probably the low point in the old doll's life; it now looks like she may be regaining some of her lost vigor. The big blue machine has been phased out, and the AM station at 1000 on the dial—the same radio station that once gave WLS a real run for its money—seems to have started the long haul back to the big time. Her new look is a little motley by modern fashion standards — it includes light pop music, a heavy emphasis on sports, a late-night jazz program, and a public-servicey talk show in the evenings—but there may be strength in this diversity. Certainly nobody has ever been able to figure out what turns people on to the programming mishmash at WGN, though that station is consistently one of the top three in Chicago. WCFL's present formula follows no rules, has little basis in scientifically proven fact, and utterly defies recent precedent in the radio game. But even the *Tribune's* Gary Deeb thinks it might work. Stranger things have happened.

...

The ice skating rink, the restaurant with the ropes on the windows overlooking the scenic Chicago River, the health club and the beauty parlor, the tunnel leading from one high-rise basement to the other, and the place on the rug where they found the body of the girl who was murdered several years ago... Marina City may be condominium now, and the tenants may come and go, but some things haven't changed. The Chicago Federation of Labor is still up in the Penthouse of the office building, and its radio station is still broadcasting. You have to get on the same old elevators to reach the 16th-floor suite, and the same old black and white sketches—of men making steel, welding pieces of things to other pieces of things, working hard at their trades, laboring—still stand vigil on

the office walls. The same old William A. Lee, an estimated 83 years old now, is president of the Chicago Federation of Labor and Industrial Union Council, and he can still be seen haunting the radio station's corridors, keeping tabs on the voice of the working man.

Many things have changed, however. The first-floor security men no longer have to interrogate the giggly sweet young things who pass through the corridor. The top floor is no longer hilled as the home of "Super CFL," and there is no longer an eight-hy-ten of the station's latest heartthrob disc jockey posted by the elevators. WCFL's 16th-floor lobby, once adorned with stacks of disc jockey photos, piles of top-40 surveys, and cases of free samples from enthusiastic advertisers, is almost bare today. Behind the receptionist's three-cornered desk, a mild-mannered lord of curvy white call letters quietly tells visitors where they're at. They've replaced a set of clean, zingy screamers that used to make it perfectly clear where "it" was at.

Down the hall a hit, to the receptionist's right, across the way from the desks and the telephones of some of the labor people, there is a deserted office suite. The inner office of this suite once housed one of the finest collections of rock radio memorabilia ever assembled. There were Tom Murphy sandwich-boards; scattered baby aerosol cans of Cruex, for relief of jock itch; a shrine to Frank Sinatra and Mayor Daley; cartons and cartons of glossy photos; pictures of deejays gazing invitingly at some anonymous teenybopper in Mt. Prospect; a Larry Lujack calendar collage; letters from famous media people stuck to the walls; a lifesize cardboard cutout of once-famed evening deejay Barney Pip standing sentry at the doorway; stacks of press releases overflowing from blue plastic chairs onto the floor.

With a little rooting around, one could usually find Mary Sweeney somewhere in this room. Sweeney was, and still is, the manager of promotion and advertising for the station. There was a lot to promote and advertise in those days, and she went about her work in a slightly mad, wise-cracking way that made her almost legendary among Chicago media watchers. When Larry Lujack joined the station on July 5, 1972, after a series of cloak-and-dagger negotiations with then station manager Lew Witz, the press got the word in Sweeney's usual off-the-wall style: "LARRY LUJACK ENTERTAINS ON WCFL!" the release cried out, "2-6PM Monday-Saturday. Station Manager Lew M. Witz has announced the appointment of Larry Lujack as host of the 2 PM to 6 PM show, Monday through Saturday, on WCFL, effective today. Lujack comes to WCFL from WLS-Radio-Chicago where he was afternoon man for 3-1/2 years and morning man for the past 1-1/2 years. BORN IN QUASQUETON, IOWA???" Larry was horn in Quasqueton, Iowa, which was too much even for him, so he went to Idaho where he went to high school and the University of. At 19, he was on the air for KCID-Caldwell-Idaho, where he gazed in awe at the program director who was making \$400.00 a month which was more money than Larry knew existed. Then, the star moved to KJRB-Spokane, KFXM, San Bernardino, KJR-Seattle and WMEX-Boston. He left WMEX in 1967 to become the all-night man at WCFL. He then went to WLS but came back to WCFL. HORSES? CALVES? SOLITUDE? BREAD? Larry likes horses. Also white-faced calves (Herefords). He golfs and plays tennis in the summertime and he skis in the winter. His grooviest gig was at the age of 17, in the forestry service, alone, on a mountaintop, content, serene. He knew, even then, where the grass was greener."

Another typical Sweeney release relayed this interesting information: "WCFL Station Manager Lew M. Witz has announced the appointment of Lex

Young as Operations Manager, effective immediately. ICE SKATING IN HIS FINSEL TUITU!" Lex got the good news as he skated from the North Western station to his favorite hangout, the Marina City Skating Rink, where he's into flying splits, etc. Lex will supervise all operations at WCFL. THE FLYING CAMEL? While cleverly perfecting his flying camel, his double lutz and beaming on his triple axel and tricky toe loops, Lex modestly admitted that he is on exhibition at skating rinks in Highland Park, Niles, Oak Brook, Willow Springs and Westmont, nites & weekends. "WHAT DOES HE DO IN HIS SPARE TIME?" YOU ARE PROBABLY ASKING. Lex and his lovely bride, Sheila Twelveteeths, live in a rambling Elmhurst castle booming with snowflaky Strauss waltzes drowned out by Kathy (19) David (18) Peggy (17) John (15) Julie (13) Greg (10) and Lexie (9) listening to SUPER CFL."

Press releases like that veritahly poured out of Sweeney's office-cum-museum. Sometimes they literally poured—along with the glossy photos, survey sheets, various plastic promotional items, and Mary Sweeney's bicycle—out the door and into a larger outer office, where several young radio station cuties assembled time charts listing music and advertisements on boards the size of their desks. Deejays and reporters and executives wandered in and out, and everybody laughed a lot. In the summertime, Sweeney would go up to the roof of the office building and call Lujack away from his sunbathing in time to do his afternoon show. Would-be groupies appeared regularly. Obscene mail poured in. It was a good

The rise, the fall, and —maybe— the comeback of WCFL



1965-68: Ken Draper



1972: Bill Lemanski, Jim Frank

time.

But now the museum has been dismantled. Sweeney took some of the artifacts home and burned the rest. The inner office is empty except for a mass of unused cabinets and retired tables and chairs; and the outer room now houses the "tomb of the unknown disc jockeys," dedicated to the memory of Jim Runyon, Joel Sebastian, Jim Stagg, Ron Britain, Barney Pip, Dick Williamson, Larry Lujack, Art Roberts, Howard Miller, Dick Biondi, Steve York, Steve York, Steve York, Bob Dearborn, Paul Kirby, Gary Price, Paul Christy, Dick Sainte, Doug Dahlgren, World Famous Tom Murphy, Jerry Kaye, Scotty Brink, Krs Erik Stevens, Ron O'Brien, Larry O'Brien, Dick Shaamon, Chuck Knapp, Dex Card,



1960-77: Lew Witz

Bill Taylor, Buddy Carr, John Driscoll, Jerry G. Bishop, Clark Weber, Robert E. Lee, Ted Anthony, Gary Gears, Tim Kelly, Don Giradeaux, Bernie Allen, Carson Rennie, Sid McCoy, Yvonne Daniels, Ron Riley, Stan Dale, Jim Bernard, Mike Rapchak, Josh Brady, Millard Hansen, Del Clark, and the rest of the 56 deejays who've left the station since 1963. It's a simple monument, an oversized desk adorned with two large Christmas wreaths, their white flocking turning gray and their red ribbons beginning to deteriorate, giving silent testimony to the bravery of these men and woman.

Mary Sweeney works in a different office now, an organized work space at the other end of the 16th floor in a room that used to be the record library. A small pile of gold records in dusty frames sits in the far corner—"Hanky Panky," by Tommy James and the Shondells; "The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down," by Joan Baez; "Daddy Don't You Walk So Fast," by Wayne Newton; and that old standard, "The Night Chicago Died," by Paper Lace—the only remnants of the thousands of tunes kept in the onetime vault of treasured music. The releases that Sweeney produces in this new office are a little drier than the ones she used to send out. When Bill Lemanski became station manager in August of last year, she wrote: "William A. Lee, general manager of WCFL Radio, has announced the appointment of William J. Lemanski as station manager effective immediately. Lemanski was previously retail sales manager for the station. Lemanski came to WCFL in April, 1976 from WBBM radio where

he was an account executive. Before that he was sales manager for WRKO Chicago for five years. On March 15, 1976, WCFL became the only, full-time 50,000-watt, beautiful music station in America."

That's all she wrote.

The story of WCFL's rise and fall really begins in 1965, when Ken Draper took over as general manager. There was no real format then, the station had no discernible direction, and the ratings were poor, about 3 percent of Chicago's total audience during the week. Draper set out to make "CFL" a rock station with "personality" disc jockeys, and he began assembling what

WCFL

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he considered to be the finest lineup of talent in the city: he brought Jim Runyon with him from WKYC in Cleveland to do the morning show, and Runyon was considered one of the funniest men on the air by the critics at the time. He hosted WCFL's five-minute "Chickenman" show (the creation and vehicle of the now rich-and-famous Dick Orkin, whom Draper had also brought from Cleveland) and a couple of other morning features. The Joel Sebastian program that followed Runyon and the Dick Williamson gig that came after Sebastian were restrained shows aimed at the great housewife audience. Jim Stagg, also imported from Cleveland, opened "The Stagg Line" after school, interviewing recording stars between tunes and then turning the celebrities over for questioning via the telephone. Stagg didn't quite have free reign over the microphone—there was always the possibility that an adult commuter might tune in—but Ron Britain, the post-dinner deejay, operated with almost no restrictions at all. Britain came up with a late-evening Batman parody, "Fatman and Robin Birdlegs," two antiheroes who ferreted out "crime and obesity" traveling in the "fatmobile." Then came Pip's show at 9 o'clock and what it lacked in intelligence it made up for with silliness. Pip may be remembered best for the crowd cry, "Turn into peanut butter!", which was dropped into the show wherever Barney felt it was appropriate. Yvonne Daniels and Sid McCoy took over the microphones at midnight with a jazz show.

Draper was clearly out to get the WLS audience, and he thought the best way to do that was by playing the hits, lining up the personalities, and promoting the hell out of both. The hits were determined by the WCFL "Sound Ten Survey," a direct steal of the "Silver Dollar Survey" that WLS used during the same period. The list was compiled by telephone polls taken every week from area record stores.

Draper's methods weren't as scientific as those that his successor would bring later, but they seemed to work just fine. Two years after he started his overhaul, WCFL began to move up. By June of 1967, WCFL was averaging about 9 percent of the weekday audience to WLS's 11 percent. The nighttime teenage audience survey showed WLS in the lead with 16 percent and WCFL right behind with 15. Three years earlier the figures had been 34 percent for WLS and 3 for WCFL.

Draper told a newspaper reporter that year that he was in the rock 'n' roll racket for money and satisfaction. "I want the largest share of the mass audience. I don't like talking to just a few people. I like talking to a lot. The rationale of being content with second never appealed to me," he said.

Draper, who was in his early 30s ten years ago, struck his contemporaries as shrewd, talented, tough, and sometimes ruthless. "The fact that he was in Davenport four years, Portland one, and Cleveland two and a half years, suggests that Draper gets his kicks out of rising to the top and then splitting to build another station," reporter Dean Gysel wrote at the time. "I have the impression he would get bored with maintaining the pinnacle. One of Draper's first moves here was to buy 35 jingles ('It's a WCF-L-egant summer') for \$1,000 each. Since then, he has bargained the city with promotions ranging from the distinctive 'Chickenman' series, which geared to the Batman craze, to the current Amazon Ace offshoot, both created by Dick Orkin. He has painstakingly picked his disc jockeys and never let them out of his ear. 'Talent,' he [Draper] said, referring to on-the-air personalities, 'must know more than just the hip phrases. They've got to be able to stand up and entertain and be responsive to the particular audience at that time.' Draper is paid \$40,000 a year for knowing when a 'talent' is faking or really relating to the audience. He must be a psychologist and a sociologist."

While the late 60s marked a period of enthusiasm and growth at WCFL, it was also a very frightening few years. In August 1966, Mary Sweeney was left alone in a room at the International Amphitheatre with all four Beatles. She hopes that the incident will be engraved on her tombstone. "The promoters wanted to put them in a room where no one would bother them, so they put them with me. All they said was 'Yes, Mum. Thank you, Mum.'" The era of the revolving-door disc jockey had begun by this time, and Sweeney found herself turning out press releases for the new arrivals just as the ink was drying on the releases for the guys they were replacing.

Eventually, Draper, too, became the victim of rock radioitis and the revolving door (he spent too much money). Lew Witz took over in 1968, after Draper had been on the job a little more than three years.

What happened at WCFL during Witz's nine-year tenure is still a puzzle, and the subject of hot gossip in radio circles. There are a few certainties: WCFL lagged just behind WLS for the first few years Witz was in charge. In about his fourth year, though, "CFL" began to spurt again, and finally, in

May of 1973, the Voice of Labor heat its across-the-river adversary in the ratings. Larry Lujack, whom Witz had lured away from WLS in 1972 with a fat five-year contract, was certainly part of the reason why. Witz's gargantuan "Last Contest" giveaway blitz may have been a factor, too (although some might say it drove away more listeners than it attracted). Last but not least, Witz claimed at the time, was "psychographic testing," a scientific programming technique brought to WCFL through Witz, by a Texas outfit called TM Productions.

Psychographic testing, as Witz described it, worked on a simple principle. You take some average 18-to-35-year-old people—the sort who have an almost unlimited amount of money to spend on cars, fast food, movies, records, entertainment events, clothes, and cosmetics—and hook them up to a machine that's sort of like a lie detector. Then you play newly released records for them and see how their bodies respond. If you make note of those records that produce the most profound reactions and put those records on the air, it follows that the 18-to-35-year-old people listening to that sound will, at least subliminally, be continuously stimulated by it and will not, therefore, touch that dial.

The psychograph, according to Witz, had almost limitless possibilities. It could report on the effects of disc jockey patter, station ID jingles, commercials, etc. And while Super CFL continued to ride high, everybody bought Lew Witz's explanation for the phenomenon. Computers were a hot topic for discussion anyway, and Witz's was certainly an interesting concept in a scientific age. The rumors started later, but that's getting ahead of the story.

Anyway, whatever the reasons for "CFL's" day in the sun, it turned out to be a short day. In 1974, the ratings were dropping. The deejays came and went at an even more rapid rate than they had before. Something was going wrong. WLS's Bob Sirrott was making considerable headway against Lujack in the afternoon. The contests and advertising weren't enjoying the success they had once enjoyed. Witz went back to his computer advisers for the answers, and the solution, he decided, was to get out of the rock rat race altogether.

Witz couldn't help but notice that both WLAK and WLOO (FM100) were (and are) very profitable stations in the beautiful "muzak" market. And, he knew, grocery store, elevator, background tunes—the senile strings—had been tried successfully on AM radio in other parts of the country. Not only that, beautiful music could be pumped out of a radio station automatically. A

computerized tape system could replace the traditional manual operation at an enormous savings, and, because the format didn't include "personalities," there was no need for high-priced disc jockeys. Rumors about Witz's plans for the format change ran wild, and paranoia at WCFL spread until finally, one afternoon in the beginning of 1976, the staff read in the green streak edition of the *Chicago Tribune* that WCFL was moving to a beautiful music format. A format that would cost many of them their jobs.

The day before St. Patrick's Day, Mayor Daley threw a switch finishing WCFL's days as a rocker, and the computer, programmed with music supplied by TM Productions in Texas, took over. WCFL's "beautiful music," according to Witz, would fill an enormous need in the Chicago market. By the time Lew Witz departed a year and three months later, the ratings had hit an all-time low.

Theories explaining the swift decline of the station abound. Critic Gary Deeb is not reluctant to say that Lew Witz killed rock radio on WCFL. "Witz inherited a pretty good growing station from Ken Draper," Deeb says. "He got Lujack and that helped and he did well. They even got ahead of 'LS in one [ratings] book, but then they started doing all these little things." As anybody who read Gary Deeb in the *Tribune* during Witz's last couple years with WCFL knows, those "things" included speeding up records to make the station sound faster, more energetic. "You hear John Denver sing 'Thank God I'm a Country Boy' at 48 revolutions per minute," Deeb explains, "you know that the record is too fast." Deeb also accused the station of giving phony time checks on purpose. People keeping diaries for Arbitron keep them according to the quarter hour, and a station has to get eight minutes of a quarter hour in order for it to "count" in the ratings. For instance, if a listener tuned in "CFL" for five minutes, WLS for seven minutes, and WIND for three minutes, no station would score for that quarter hour," Deeb explains. "Say it's exactly 4:04. The disc jockey says that it's one minute after four and plays a record. Now the record is finished and the time is 4:07, but the deejay says that it's 4:09. That means that 'CFL' would get credit for eight minutes—the quarter hour." Deeb was offended when WCFL failed to announce that Richard Nixon had resigned until several hours after it happened, but he admits that that was not the type of thing that would offend a regular listener. "What killed them was doing so many things that the listeners did care about," Deeb says. "Speeding up the records. Certain

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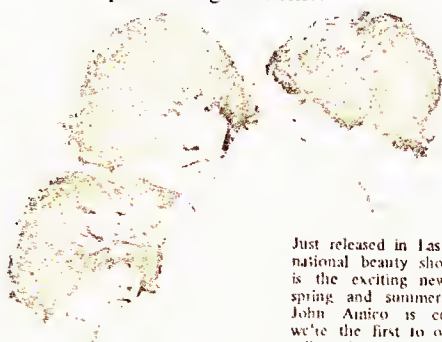
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uptempo records you can't fool people on. And they were always changing deejays. The only stable guy was Lujack. On the other hand, WLS was as stable as they could be. People in the audience get the idea it's a revolving door. They were always yelling and screaming about contests. WLS was yelling and screaming about contests too, but in a much less obnoxious way. WCFL also got in trouble with the FCC when they put on an Elvis Presley program and tagged it as public affairs programming [though, after a hearing on the subject, the FCC found that WCFL had done it "unintentionally"]. It was just a gross station and it got to sound very scary on the air." Deeb had hinted publicly that Lew Witz was somehow connected to TM, the outfit that did the psychographic testing as well as the beautiful music programming. But, he says, "By the time I got around to really getting into it, it was too late. I could never lay anything legal on them."

Larry Lujack's explanation for WCFL's failure as a rock station is much simpler. "In my opinion," he says, "they were not playing the hits. We were playing songs that nobody else in the country was playing. We were playing some really *bad* records. Another reason the station got into troubles was we were going through a new program director every six months. After a while 'CFL was out-promoted, out-hyped, and out-brainwashed [by WLS]. They poured money into it, a ton of money, just like everybody else. You could have six of the world's best disc jockeys and if the programming department and the promotion department are screwing up it doesn't make any difference. What really counts is what comes over the air and what the radio station sounds like." Jim Frank, current program director at WCFL, gives a similar explanation. "WCFL failed as a rocker because we played all the wrong music; we didn't play the hits." Why didn't they play the hits? Frank doesn't know, he wasn't program director at the time. "In this business," Frank says, "you wait to be asked. A hundred guys I know went charging into the office. They get in the office and the guy says to them, 'Okay, fine,' and the next week the guy's not there. It is interesting that WLS hasn't enjoyed all that much growth since WCFL changed its format."

Whatever the reasons for it, WCFL's failure as a rocker was a mere mishap compared to the automated beautiful music travesty. The big blue machine still stands in the shadows of the studio, but now it's mostly just a reminder of a very unhappy year and a half. Most of

the deejays departed immediately after the machine arrived. Doug Dahlgren and Dick Samie, who hosted the morning show, were escorted off the air and out of the station by security guards shortly before the switch to BM was made. Lujack remained and so did Mary Sweeney. A handful of newsroom people stayed on, as did the engineers. But the people who remained found that their jobs changed substantially. The metamorphosis in Lujack's job was the most obvious to the general public. Lujack refused to let the station out of its expensive contract, so he worked as a staff announcer whose duties consisted of reading the time and the temperature and the station's call letters. For that he was paid \$135,000 a year, while the 'CFL management looked for a way to get rid of him. It lasted about six months. "I've got nothing against the station," Lujack says. "Mr. Lee is a nice man, a straight shooter, and he's very honest. Those last few months presented a very uncomfortable situation. I knew they were trying to nail me any way they could on some technicality, so I had to be very careful about what I was doing. Every fifteen minutes I was giving the time and the temperature. One time I accidentally gave the wrong time. Like, I said it was quarter to four instead of quarter to three. Mr. Witz rushed around to get secretaries to sign a thing that they heard me give the wrong time. They were taping every word I said and it got to the point that nobody else there would talk to me because they knew management was trying to get me out and they didn't want to be associated with me. Spacey Dave [Schuessler, Lujack's engineer] and Mary Sweeney were my closest friends at the station and I think it was hard on them. Dave, for very mysterious reasons, was suddenly demoted to an all-night gig out at the transmitter. The main reason that occurred to me was because he was my friend and they knew that it would piss me off, which it did. But not enough to quit. Friendship only goes so far." Lujack's contract was settled about the same time Lew Witz left and Larry moved to a morning gig at WLS.

Spacey Dave is now back working days downtown. He says there were other considerations, besides his relationship with Lujack, that got him sent out to the transmitter site in Downers Grove. A vacancy occurred out there and the workload for the engineers downtown had been cut substantially by the computer. "When we did beautiful music the engineers played the commercials, played the tapes that played the music, and were responsible for programming the computer and

maintaining the machine," Dave explains. Working with live announcers was a lot more challenging and a lot more fun. "I did a good job and Larry gave me credit," he says. "The whole thing with being a good engineer is having a good sense of timing, liking whatever you're doing, anticipating tape editings, withstanding the pressure. You have to be able to work with people, leap tall buildings in a single bound..." Before his stint as Lujack's engineer in the afternoon, Schuessler had moved around a lot within the station, working different shows at different times. Now that beautiful music has been abandoned, his job is pretty much the same as it used to be, and he still likes it very much. "I didn't quit when it got bad because I couldn't get an offer that was as good as this. If you're sorry about what you're doing you don't do it."

With the temporary demise of "personality," Mary Sweeney's duties as advertising and promotion director were cut back. Her feelings about the change are philosophical. "It's like that Billy Joel single, 'Just the Way You Are,' where he says, 'I took the good times... I'll take the bad times.' I'll take the BM. For every day I've been here I feel that I should give them six million dollars, it's been so heavenly."

Jim Frank was hired by Lew Witz in 1969 as a newsman, and he worked in news until March of 1976. "I was always trying to escape out of there," Frank laughs, gesturing toward the newsroom. "I tried to work City Hall, anything. There was a lot of money in the news budget then. We did space shorts, turtle races. We had a helluva news department. It started to fold up around 1975. When we were doing the news with rock 'n' roll we had to make it as exciting as possible and for a while there we outdid every news operation in town. That was in '72, '73, and '74. There was no way to compare that to right now. There's really no news budget. We have the Mutual Network and UPI audio, but there are three news people here now and before we had as many as eight."

Frank is hoping that, with the change back to a pop format and the renewed emphasis on service, the news operation will expand again. In his present position as program director he has some say-so in that area. He got the director's job by default. "Lew [Witz] was going out of rock 'n' roll and he offered the position first to Boh Dearborn and then to Johnny Driscoll but neither of them wanted to stay." When Frank took the job he found that the most difficult part was keeping people motivated in the face of beautiful music. "The staff announcers had to

sound like they were alive," he says. "There are all kinds of theories on why beautiful music didn't work here and my feeling is it didn't work because of the difference between AM and FM hands. Beautiful music has done well on FM because a beautiful music fan will go for better fidelity given the opportunity. An AM station can't compete in a major market."

Jim Frank is excited and enthusiastic about what's happening at WCFL right now. "We've decided what it is we want. Roughly it's entertainment, news, and sports. We're talking about good music: Kenny Rogers, Sergio Mendez, Frank Sinatra. I had my hair done a week ago by a 23-year-old woman who's a disco dancer and a good one. She listens to WCFL. She says she's always playing her father's music, it's nice. It's not easy listening; it's not a rocker, that's ratings terminology. Plus, we're developing very strong people on the station in the news department and there's Jack Stockton's talk show, Pat Sheridan doing the sportscasting, and guys like Boh Andrews, who started as a beautiful music announcer. He's a cherub with a wild sense of humor. Bill Lemanski [the station manager] is extremely receptive to all ideas. It's become a family situation. He is the last one to turn down an idea. We're testing our library now. We've told people to be more aggressive, we want to play more vocals and get blendability."

Lemanski worked as a salesman for two years before he took over as station manager at 'CFL. He is responsible for the phase-out of the big blue machine. "I don't think that a 50,000-watt station should be automated. When I was given the opportunity to manage this station I wanted to play a greater diversity and try and reach a bigger audience. I don't like the word format. I don't want to be formatted." Though WCFL doesn't have one right now, Lemanski hopes to develop radio personalities again. He's pleased at the success of the late-night jazz show and he has an eye on a continued super sports lineup. There is a possibility that 'CFL may be able to obtain the rights to the White Sox games. They lost the Sox during Draper's first year as station manager 13 years ago.

Jazz show? White Sox? Emphasis on public service? Slam-bang news department? Middle-of-the-road pop music? Possible development of new radio personalities? Sounds like... WCFL, 15 years ago.

If everything goes according to schedule, Larry Lujack should be back doing the afternoon show again by 1985.

Stranger things have happened.

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